

GORBACHEV HINTS HE WOULD ACCEPT MULTIPARTY RULE

WINDS UP LITHUANIA VISIT

Says Ending the Communist Party Monopoly on Power Would Be No 'Tragedy'

By ESTHER B. FEIN

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VILNIUS, U.S.S.R., Jan. 13 — In his most conciliatory comments to date on the prospect of a multiparty system, President Mikhail S. Gorbachev said today that ending the Communist Party monopoly on power in the Soviet Union would not be a "tragedy."

Mr. Gorbachev was speaking at the end of a tense three-day visit to defiant Lithuania, where despite warnings from Moscow the parliament has legalized rival political parties and where the Communist Party has declared itself independent of the national party in Moscow.

"I don't see any tragedy in a multiparty system if it arises and actually answers the interests of society," Mr. Gorbachev said in response to a question at an often stormy meeting with several hundred Lithuanian Communists.

'Should Not Be Afraid'

"We should not be afraid of it, the way the devil is of incense," he said, adding that a multiparty system "should not be artificially imposed."

Mr. Gorbachev has strongly opposed efforts to end the Communist Party's constitutionally guaranteed domination, arguing that the party is the only force capable of uniting the country in a period of political and economic crisis.

Lithuania has been a persistent political problem for the Soviet leader, and people here have increasingly called for independence from Moscow. After three days of travel and meetings in the republic, Mr. Gorbachev failed to persuade Communists here to reverse their decision last month to break with the central party in Moscow or to reconsider their calls for an independent Lithuanian state.

Election Due Next Month

The Lithuanian Communists' decision was made after the party's prestige and membership began to drop sharply as Lithuanians calling for greater freedom saw the party as a tool in Moscow's hands. The party suffered widespread defeats in elections last March to a new Soviet Parliament and made the break from Moscow partly in an attempt to prevent similar embarrassments in elections next month for the republic's legislature.

Today's meeting with members of the breakaway party and Communists who chose to remain loyal to Moscow was Mr. Gorbachev's final attempt to convince people of the dire consequences of secession from the Soviet Union.

While acknowledging, as he has several times these last few days, that each republic has the constitutional right to secede, Mr. Gorbachev warned that the republic was ill-prepared for

Gorbachev Says He's Open to Multiparty Rule

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such a course.

"Think a thousand times before embarking on an independent drift, without a compass, without a map, reserves of fuel and a competent crew," he said. "You cannot drop people on an iceberg and say, 'Let them swim.'"

At today's meeting, which was broadcast live on Lithuanian television and radio and was reported as the main item on the national evening news from Moscow, Mr. Gorbachev reflected the various postures he has taken during his trip, organized as a fact-finding mission after the Communist Party's Central Committee failed to agree on a response to the Lithuanians' defiant split.

Mr. Gorbachev joked with the people in the hall, chastised them, appealed to them and lectured them.

In one of his most fervent pleas to the listeners to abandon their drive for independence, he said, "There is no absolute freedom, and you will not find absolute independence anywhere even with a high-powered telescope."

This was far from a passive audience, and even before Mr. Gorbachev began his address speaker after speaker told him firmly that they remained convinced of the correctness of their choice despite the intensive visit by Mr. Gorbachev and a 40-member Moscow delegation.

"Maybe we are taking a risk," said the party chief from the port city of Klaipeda, "but we cannot just sit on our hands."

Worker Criticizes Gorbachev

Although the purpose of the trip was to assess the mood among Communists in the republic, to understand better why so many chose to reject Moscow's control, the focus became the popular movement in the republic toward secession.

A factory worker sharply criticized Mr. Gorbachev for spending his time in Lithuania lecturing people rather than listening.

"We know your ideas," he said. "You should have listened to our ideas."

"I already know your opinion," Mr. Gorbachev snapped back.

Vladislav Sved, the temporary leader of the party's pro-Moscow faction, called the decision by his former colleagues "illegitimate" but said it was a reality the party leadership had to deal with.

'Psychological Pressure' Cited

One speaker said the pro-independence forces in the party applied "psychological pressure" in Lithuania, preventing people from comfortably disagreeing with them.

"If this is where freedom and independence begin," he said, "then excuse me, where are we going?"

Mostly the speakers today chiseled away at arguments Mr. Gorbachev presented in trying to make a case for pursuing the goal of independence through a radically restructured Soviet Union.

Kazimiera Prunskiene, deputy



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Mikhail S. Gorbachev ended a tense visit to Lithuania, and 2 people were reported killed in attacks by Azerbaijanis in Baku.

prime minister and a leader of the newly independent Lithuanian party, said Lithuania had to make decisions based on current realities, not on a promised federation that does not yet exist.

"If our arguments about the secession of Lithuania from the Soviet Union under today's conditions and the independence of the Communist Party of Lithuania are not convincing," she told Mr. Gorbachev, "then think how skeptical we are of a new union whose plan we have never seen."

Lithuanian Communists are appealed to and lectured.

Algirdas Brazauskas, the leader of the breakaway Lithuanian party, explained that it had split with Moscow because the Communist Party as a whole "had changed little" in the last few years when Mr. Gorbachev began directing a restructuring of the country's economic and political life.

"Time waits for no one, as life shows," Mr. Brazauskas said, adding, "Different times require different decisions."

In his speech, Mr. Gorbachev rebuked Mr. Brazauskas, saying, "If nothing had happened in the party, we would not be speaking today about this subject."

He also challenged Mr. Brazauskas to say how the Moscow authorities had interfered with his work in Lithuania.

Mr. Gorbachev and the Central Committee delegation have apparently decided to hold off on any decision about the party's relationship with the Lithuanian Communists. Mr. Gorbachev said they would see each other at the 28th party congress in October, adding, "I hope we have laid the foundation to continue this dialogue."



Demonstrators behind a line of soldiers in Vilnius, the capital of Lithuania, yesterday. The sign at left reads, "Gorbachev, take the army out of Lithuania."

Lithuania: A Land Most Often Dominated by Grasping Neighbors

By FRANK J. PRIAL

"What was stolen must be returned."

Vytautas Landsbergis, a Lithuanian nationalist who is also a member of the Soviet Congress of People's Deputies, expressed a longtime yearning of the Lithuanian people when he spoke at a rally in Cathedral Square in Vilnius last week. President Mikhail S. Gorbachev's appeal that Lithuania remain within the Soviet Union runs contrary to a desire for independence.

Lithuania, absorbed by Poland in the 16th century, suffered under the gradual dissolution of Poland at the hands of czarist Russia in the 18th century and, after three partitions of Poland — in 1772, 1793 and 1795, became, like Poland itself, a part of Russia.

Lithuanian history in the 19th century was marked by a linguistic and cultural revival led principally by the Roman Catholic clergy. The revival in turn inspired frequent anti-Russian uprisings that culminated in Lithuanian independence with the collapse of Germany and Russia after World War I.

Brief Independence

Proclaimed an independent kingdom under German protection in February 1918, Lithuania became a republic in November that year. Its

Before the Soviets, it was the Czars, or Poland, or Germany.

independence was short-lived. Bolshevik forces installed a pro-Soviet regime in January 1919. With German help, the Bolsheviks were expelled in August 1919, and a peace treaty recognizing Lithuanian independence was signed by Moscow in July 1920.

The Poles seized Vilnius, the old Lithuanian capital, three months later and occupied it until World War II. It was ceded to Poland in 1938, then returned to Lithuania after the Nazi-Stalinist partition of Poland a year later.

Lithuania was forcibly incorporated into the Soviet Union in 1940 along with the Baltic republics of Estonia and Latvia and parts of Moldavia, after Stalin and Hitler signed a secret agreement dividing Eastern Europe into spheres of influence.

After a well-controlled election, the Kremlin made Lithuania a republic of the Soviet Union. It was that step

that the Lithuanian Parliament declared invalid last August. The next year, German troops rolled in and occupied Lithuania for four years. In July 1944, the Soviet Army recaptured Vilnius, and a period of Sovietization began.

It was not the first such attempt experienced by the Lithuanians. From 1864 to 1905, all books, magazines and periodicals in either Polish or Byelorussian were banned and books in Lithuanian could be published only in the Cyrillic alphabet. Russian was the only language permitted in the schools, and the Roman Catholic Church was banned.

Lithuanians have paid dearly for their demands for independence. When they joined the failed Polish uprising against Russia in 1863, 180 Lithuanian insurgents were hanged and 9,000 were deported to Siberia.

The night of June 14-15, 1941, the Soviets rounded up and deported to Siberia 30,000 Lithuanian intellectuals. In all, the first Soviet occupation of the country resulted in about 45,000 people being deported or killed, including 5,000 political prisoners executed as the Russians fled the Nazis.

When the Soviets returned in 1944, about 60,000 Lithuanians were deported to Siberia. During 1945 and 1946, the Soviets deported 145,000 more, and when forced collectivization of agriculture reached Lithuania

in 1949, a further 60,000 people were sent to northern Russia and Siberia.

Annually, despite Soviet objections, Lithuanians have marked the anniversary of their 1918 declaration of independence with rallies and celebrations. At cultural and athletic events, Lithuanians regularly jeered Soviet contestants, and, in recent years, Russian residents of Lithuania frequently complained that they were mistreated by militant Lithuanians.

The Catholic Church, officially proscribed by Moscow, remained strong and influential, even underground. Once, in the early 1970's, 17,000 Lithuanian Catholics directly petitioned the United Nations Secretary General for assistance.

They preserved their literature and language, prevailing upon Moscow to make Lithuanian their official language two years ago. According to the Europa Yearbook for 1989, 105 of the 134 newspapers published in Lithuania are in the Lithuanian language, as are 88 of the country's 119 periodicals.

Ethnic Lithuanians make up about 80 percent of the republic's population of 3.6 million. There are substantial numbers of Russians and Poles, as well as Byelorussian and Latvian minorities. A considerable Jewish population was largely exterminated from 1941 to 1944.

Last August, just as all three Baltic republics, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, prepared their mass demonstrations to mark the 50th anniversary of the Stalin-Hitler pact of 1939, a commission of the Lithuanian Parliament declared that the 1940 Soviet incorporation of Lithuania was invalid.

2 Deaths Are Reported In Strife in Azerbaijan

MOSCOW, Jan. 13 (Reuters) — Mobs attacked homes today in a former Armenian district of Baku, the capital of Soviet Azerbaijan, and at least two people were killed, reports from the area said.

The official press agency Tass said there were "tragic events" in the city that brought "human victims." An independent local journalist in Baku said the first reports he gathered indicated that two people died.

The journalist, Nazim Ragimov, said the incidents came after some demonstrators broke away from a huge Azerbaijani independence rally after "provocateurs" distributed pamphlets calling for a pogrom against Armenians.